



COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS AND GREENE NAFTALI, NEW YORK

GELATIN

Through Aug. 4. Greene Naftali, 508 West 26th Street, Manhattan; 212-463-7770, greenenaftaligallery.com.

Playful and puerile, the current show from the collective Gelatin, “New York Golem,” at Greene Naftali, corresponds with the ethos of its earlier work as well as the long history of Austrian art provocateurs like Egon Schiele, the Vienna Actionists, Valie Export and Franz West.

The “golems” are abstract ceramic sculptures that the male artists made by pressing or wrapping clay around their genitals. The objects are displayed on pedestals made of buckets, flower pots, furniture or other traditionally nonart materials. The use of unorthodox pedestals is not particularly radical: It goes back to Brancusi and up through artists like Jessica Stockholder, Isa Genzken and Rachel Harrison.

Rather, the anti-art gesture of art “made” with penises is the focus here. (Although the penis also has quite a history in art, including comparisons of the paintbrush-as-penis and Brancusi’s baldly phallic sculptures.) A gallery news release written in

syntax-challenged English needles viewers even further, describing the golems in airy, aesthetic terms: “The plinth lifts the ceramic gracefully to give it space to unfold. More than 40 of these New York golems come to life in the gallery. Every ceramic rests on an individually designed plinth and is ready for a closer inspection. Come and touch their feeling.” And sure, why not?

For those familiar with this collective’s work, the only thing that detracts from this show is Gelatin’s own history, with spectacular gestures like “Tantamounter 24/7” (2005), a “live” photocopier with the artists sealed inside, or “Weltwunder” (2000), a work you had to experience underwater. Then there’s the memory of its first show at Greene Naftali, in which viewers could watch the artists make sculptures, live and blindfolded. When compared with these feats and provocations, the penis imprints feel tame, even tasteful.

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